

EXCERPTS FROM SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS  
ON THE SO-CALLED  
"INTELLIGENCE GAP"  
IN CUBAN RECONNAISSANCE

TAB A-----THE PRESIDENT

TAB B-----SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

TAB C-----ASD(PA)

TAB D-----OTHER

DEPT. OF THE ARMY (FOIA) (RELEASED TO THOMAS G. PATERSON)

President's Press Conference, 13 September 1962

"...We shall increase our surveillance of the whole Caribbean area..."

"Now that movement (Soviet personnel) has been increasing. It is under our most careful surveillance..."

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President's Address to the Nation, 22 October 1962

Upon receiving the first preliminary hard information of this nature last Tuesday morning at 9:00 a.m., I directed that our surveillance be stepped up. And having now confirmed and completed our evaluation of the evidence and our decision on a course of action, this government feels obliged to report this new crisis to you in fullest detail.

Secretary McNamara's Statement before the House Armed Services Committee,  
30 January 1963

During the latter part of July and the early part of August, an unusual number of Soviet ships unloaded cargo and passengers at Cuban ports. There were also reports that during the unloading process, all Cubans were excluded from the dock areas and that the stevedoring was accomplished by Soviet personnel accompanying the equipment. By the middle of August, analysis of these reports highlighted the possibility that the Soviet Union was probably introducing surface-to-air missile systems in Cuba, and accordingly special attention was focused on the suspected areas of deployment. As a result of the next high altitude reconnaissance mission, flown on the 29th of August, positive identification was established of SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites at two of these suspect locations and at six others also in Western Cuba. A short-range coastal defense cruise missile installation was also subsequently identified.

Up to this time, high altitude reconnaissance missions over Cuba were flown on a regular schedule, weather permitting. These missions were directed to cover the principal airfields, ports, and areas of particularly military significance. As a result, we were able to keep close watch on the progress of aircraft deliveries and assembly, airfield improvements, new construction of military installations, development of defensive works around critical areas, delivery and operational readiness of naval units, and the security of the U. S. Naval Base at Guantanamo.

Each flight after 29 August through 7 October discovered new SAM sites, and three additional cruise missile sites were revealed. Still, there was no evidence indicating the presence of an offensive capability; all these missile systems were defensive in nature.

Actually, interpretation of the high altitude photographs taken before 14 October 1962 of the areas which refugee reports indicated as the most likely locations to contain missiles, either disproved the presence of missiles or linked the suspected activity to SAM or cruise-type missiles that posed no offensive threat to the United States.

The second crucial stage of the story started in late September when a recently arrived Cuban refugee gave the first description of equipment that could be equated with a medium-range ballistic missile. Although raw and unevaluated, this report was an indication of the possible presence in Cuba of offensive ballistic missiles.

The third and final stage in our detection of strategic missiles resulted from careful evaluation of this refugee report--together with other intelligence. In conjunction with a suspicious pattern of deployment of SAM sites noted in the same general area--a pattern which could not be related to any known military installations--analysis of this single report resulted in the designation of a specific area as a suspect medium-range ballistic missile site. Photographic coverage was thereupon proposed, and on the

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14th of October a military high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft flew a flight route specifically planned to cover this suspect MRBM area. This led to the discovery of the San Cristobal MRBM complex. The aircraft flew directly over the assigned target area and emerged with hard photographic evidence of the San Cristobal MRBM complex.

Questions and Answers, . 30 January 1963 (Excerpts)

Mr. ARENDS. Then we came to the conclusion that something really important was happening in Cuba, although belatedly.

SECRETARY McNAMARA. I don't believe personally, that we came to that conclusion belatedly.

One of the startling points, it seems to me, from the briefing this morning, I think is the rapidity with which these missile systems were put in place.

As you saw on the September 5 photograph, a field which on October 14 showed a missile system, was absolutely barren.

We ran continuous flights in September and October of U-2s over the island of Cuba. It was only in the October flight that we observed the systems you saw, and, as you could see from the October 14 and later coverage, the deployment of those systems was just getting under way at that time.

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Mr. PHILBIN. I agree, of course, with the Chairman, that this was a very good and comprehensive briefing.

It seems to me, in the first instance, that over a period of time Cuba has been literally turned into an armed camp by the Soviet Union. From these maps and pictures it would seem that these operations and this buildup has gone on for a considerable period of time.

Now, could the Department, or anyone in the room, give us an explanation of how long this buildup was going on, in their considered opinion, and why the buildup was not discovered before?

SECRETARY McNAMARA. I believe that the major part of the buildup occurred between the first of July of last year and mid-October. It was known and had been stated publicly before the first of July the Soviets had been supplying military equipment to the Cubans and had been assisting them in the use of such equipment and the training for the operation of such equipment through the introduction of Soviet military personnel and/or Soviet technicians into Cuba prior to that time.

But the great increase in the number of personnel and the great increase in the quantity of equipment began after the first of July.

I will be happy, if you wish, Mr. Chairman, to give to the committee, or introduce into the record, some highly classified figures on the quantities or the major items of equipment on the first of July in relation to the quantities that were discussed with you earlier this morning.

Mr. PHILBIN. In other words, you think, and the Department thinks, from your best information, that the real big buildup of these launching pads and medium range missiles being set up, occurred in the time between July 1, roughly, and the time that you pressed the button on it.

SECRETARY McNAMARA. Yes. For example, in terms of personnel, I believe there were probably less than one thousand Soviet personnel there on July 1, compared to 21,000 we believe were there in late October.

Joe, is that a fair statement?

GENERAL CARROLL. Yes, sir.

SECRETARY McNAMARA. In terms of equipment, for example, I could give you certain specific items of equipment. You may be interested in them.

I have a list of all of the equipment.

Mr. PHILBIN. My point was, it was very surprising to me, and I think to some others, that this buildup could occur so speedily without being discovered, considering the fact that you were conducting surveillance during that period and for some period before the time of the big buildup.

SECRETARY McNAMARA. The surveillance that was reported on this morning started in detail about August 29, but General Carroll and Mr. Hughes could have started with their reports starting the first of July, and there was ample evidence, and we were so informed in the Government, that a substantial introduction of Soviet personnel and arms was taking place following the first of July.

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Mr. PHILBIN. You don't think there is any concealment measures they could develop or use that would make it impossible for you to detect the presence of these missiles and their buildup, by your surveillance operations?

SECRETARY McNAMARA. We have a very extensive surveillance. However, no system of surveillance of the Communist bloc activities can be considered perfect.

Mr. PHILBIN. Right.

SECRETARY McNAMARA. And I don't wish to indicate that ours is perfect.

On the other hand, I do believe that we can, with respect to objects as large and as complicated and as numerous, taking account of the support equipment, as ballistic missiles systems, I do believe that our system would detect their introduction into Cuba were they to be re-introduced.

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Mr. GAVIN. Then give us the reason why, if you had the island under surveillance, you recognized what was happening there, why we did not move in before we did with the quarantine?

SECRETARY McNAMARA. Mr. Gavin, the offensive weapon systems which were the basis for the quarantine were not introduced, to the best of our knowledge, until shortly before the quarantine was established.

We believe, as was pointed out this morning, that the first ship bringing offensive weapons to Cuba arrived in early to mid-September, probably not before the eighth, possibly shortly after that.

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Mr. OSMERS. Mr. Secretary, I have tried to approach the subject that we are discussing this morning from a little bit broader view than the days on which photographs we were looking at were taken.

I think we are confronted here, Mr. Chairman, with probably the greatest intelligence failures since Pearl Harbor.

I think that we have a choice of three areas in which we can place the blame.

First, I think we would have to say that there was a criminal conspiracy of some kind on the part of the intelligence community to report all of the facts as they knew them -- which I doubt -- or that today here we have had a massive effort on the part of the executive to mislead the Congress and the people, or we have an intelligence community that is grossly incompetent or inadequate.

I don't think we realize what we have seen here this morning. Cuba is a small place 90 miles from the United States. It is the size of New York State with a population of the state of New Jersey.

We have listened here this morning to the leading defense authorities of our nation tell us that these huge vans, trucks, containers, missiles, bombers, boxes, can be moved across the island of Cuba and we did not know one thing about it until a couple of days before they were ready to blow up half the country.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to question the Secretary as to whether it was Tuesday afternoon when the first picture was taken, or whether it was July 4.

All I know is that when this matter was handed to the President of the United States he had hours to go.

Now, Mr. Chairman, what are we, this committee, as the representatives of the people in the national defense, this is our responsibility -- what are we going to do to prevent a recurrence of this?

I am not here to re-write history.

What are we, Mr. Chairman, as a committee, as representatives of the people, going to do to prevent a recurrence?

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Mr. OSMERS. Mr. Chairman, our defense Intelligence community is completely inadequate for the problems facing the country.

It is evident from everything that has been said here this morning.

Therefore, sir, I propose that we take steps to make it an adequate defense intelligence community. That is my recommendation.

THE CHAIRMAN. I wanted the record to show that you are a member of the committee that handles in the Armed Services Committee the subcommittee on the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. OSMERS. That is right.

THE CHAIRMAN. Now, if you have any methods of strengthening it, then it is up to you to lay it before the committee.

Mr. OSMERS. We are here, Mr. Chairman, dealing with a nation of thousands of friendly people, and the word "human" source is used here in a kind of casual sense, and it would seem to me that some of the human sources must have told us what was happening.

THE CHAIRMAN. All right.

You have the responsibility -- you and all of us have the responsibility-- you are in a position where you can be heard with director McCone on any criticism you have, we created the Central Intelligence, it is our responsibility, so let's do something, instead of just talking about it.

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Mr. STRATTON. May I say, I was tremendously impressed with the presentation that you made here this morning.

I think it shows a remarkable intelligence, and I would like to commend you, as I have not had a chance to before, for your action in dealing with this crisis, and dealing with it effectively, and the fact that we can raise some of these questions here today is due to the fact that we acted effectively as we did in the Cuban crisis.

But there is an area here that disturbs me.

I have had some experience in intelligence work.

I remember when we got a briefing from General Carter, here in this room, toward the latter part of September --

Mr. WILSON. September 12.

Mr. STRATTON. We raised this question with General Carter, and I remember that he stressed not only the fact that the weapons that were in Cuba were defensive in nature, but he also went on to point out that there was no reason why the Soviets should put in any long-range offensive missiles in Cuba because they had the capacity to fire from the homeland and therefore did not need to go into Cuba.

Now, we also had some discussion of it in the press, and I know that the point has been made, and I think there is a feeling on the part of many of us that what General Carter said reflected a kind of an attitude on the part of either the intelligence community or the defense establishment, that the refugee reports not only were not subject to the kind of verification that you got when the U-2s flew, but that there was a kind of a mental predilection to even consider them seriously because of the deduction that the Soviets could not put long-range missiles into Cuba, since they did not need to.

Now, I would like you to comment on this, because we also have, if the things that I read in the paper are correct, Mr. Secretary, the information that one of the reasons for the apparent suddenness of this development was that for a period of a week or two weeks you could not fly the U-2 flights because of the weather, and that therefore these objects which got into the Cuba surreptitiously, apparently, were transported at night, so they were not subject to aerial surveillance, and then were deployed under cover of the weather, and did break out apparently quite quickly, and the thing I am concerned about is whether there was in your judgment this kind of predilection that was, or was that something that could always creep into any intelligence effort, and secondly, whether the limitations of aerial photography, due to the weather, or due to the night movements, could present us with another one of these same situations, where we could wake up tomorrow and see the Soviets had brought these things all back.

Is that a feasible situation to be concerned about?

SECRETARY McNAMARA. As I suggest earlier, I don't believe we have a perfect system of intelligence collection with respect to ascertaining what is going on in any Communist bloc nation, and that would include Cuba.

On the other hand, I disagree with Mr. Osmer's position. I think it is an absolutely erroneous interpretation of the intelligence capabilities of this Nation as they relate to Cuba.

I don't believe it would be possible for the Soviet Union to introduce into Cuba substantial quantities of equipment which would endanger this Nation's security, without being detected by the intelligence resources we have at our disposal.

I think that the subject Mr. Osmer raised is so important, his charges so violent, that it would be appropriate for certain select members of the committee, who would be properly cleared, to discuss the matter at greater length.

I am limited in my ability to discuss with you this morning the steps that were taken, the reports that were received, because I think that to do so would destroy the security of some we have.

I do want to call your attention, however, to the point that Cuba is a closed society.

To damn the intelligence community as it has been damned here this morning, without knowing more about it and without being able to suggest a positive program that will improve the situation, I think is doing our Nation a disservice.

Now, as I say, I am limited in my ability to discuss this because to do so openly, even though I know all of you would respect the executive session, would, I think, run the risk of weakening our intelligence program, and I don't think you would wish me to do that.

I would be happy to have Mr. McCone and General Carroll discuss it with such of your representatives as you choose to investigate at any further length.

Mr. STRATTON. Was there not a period between the middle of September when you saw that these missiles were introduced and the 14th of October, or the 17th of October, when you got the first photographic evidence, was there a period where we were aware that they were there?

I don't want to go into your highest information but can you answer that?

SECRETARY McNAMARA. That is an interesting period.

Perhaps General Carroll will comment further.

My recollection is, Joe, that you received three reports.

There were literally thousands of reports coming into CIA and DIA.

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THE CHAIRMAN. Let's not go into too much detail, General.

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Secretary McNamara, Cuba Briefing, 6 February 1963

Q.-- Mr. Secretary, on the photographs shown here there is a gap between early September and mid-October. Was it purely weather that denied us any reconnaissance over that five or six weeks over Cuba itself? There were a couple of ship pictures in the middle.

A.-- We did not show to you today, simply for lack of time, even a high percentage of the photographs we have taken in the last four or five months over Cuba. We have run to date over 400 sorties, for example, over the island, since the first of July. We showed you pictures from only a very small fraction of those. We did carry out reconnaissance flights over the island of Cuba on the 5th of September, the 17th, the 26th, the 29th of September, the 5th of October, the 7th and the 14th of October.

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Secretary McNamara, Press Conference, 28 February 1963

Q.-- On another subject, there has been some talk in the last few days about a possible missile gap, I mean a photo gap in the Cuban reconnaissance. Can you tell us if there was such a gap and if there was any reason why the CIA's job was taken over by the Air Force?

A.-- Let me answer the last portion of the question first and then go to the first portion of the question.

Was there any reason for the transferring operational responsibility for high level reconnaissance over Cuba from the CIA to the Air Force? The answer was yes there was such a reason. The number of flights increased to a point where the CIA aircraft were not capable of carrying them out and had to be supplemented therefore by SAC aircraft at which time the Strategic Air Command assumed responsibility for such operations.

Now as to the first portion of the question, was there a photo gap? I think not. I believe I mentioned, in fact I am certain I did, in the two-hour TV report approximately two weeks ago that between the 5th of September and the 14th of October, inclusive of those two dates, we flew and obtained photographs from six U-2 flights, one on the 5th of September and one on the 26th of September, one on the 29th of September, one on the 5th of October,

one on the 7th of October and one on the 14th of October. I think you can see that the overflights were frequent during that period.

Q.-- Mr. Secretary, can you tell us why it is that you have not released photographs from that period either publicly or to Members of Congress?

A.-- Yes. The photographs didn't relate to the subject that I presented in my TV report. We were showing the progress during that particular series of months, July, August, September, October, and the photographs from this particular set of missions didn't relate to the specific sites that I was discussing.

Q.-- Mr. Secretary, you have given what appears to be a mechanical reason for the Air Force taking over from the CIA. I wonder if there are any policy considerations?

A.-- No.

Q.-- And what you see as the role of the CIA and the Air Force in such operations?

A.-- No, there were no policy considerations. There was simply a mechanical problem, as you imply, I gave a mechanical reason, and that was the basis for the decision. The Strategic Air Command had more aircraft by far available for this mission than the CIA and the number of flights required exceeded the capabilities of the CIA during that period.

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Excerpts from ASD(PA) Press Briefing, 26 February 1963  
(Attributable to "Defense Spokesman")

Q. It (Newsweek) says there is firm basis to credit Bundy with breaking the deadlock in a dispute between CIA and SAC as to which agency would conduct U-2 flights over Cuba. According to this account it was that dispute and not the weather that left a gap of some two weeks in the U. S. over-flights. It almost enabled Khrushchev to complete his missile installations.

A. Now, there was no conflict whatsoever between SAC and the CIA in the month of September in that period whatsoever because CIA had the sole responsibility. For that matter there was no conflict between SAC and CIA at anytime.

Q. What led to the change of responsibility from the CIA to the Air Force?

A. I can't throw any light on that.

Q. Well, you are saying it wasn't in their argument. That there was a decision made to do it.

A. What I was referring to is the allegation and the suggestion and I believe the magazine is Newsweek...It cites that two weeks failure to fly was not weather which was always given as the reason but a disagreement between SAC and the CIA whether civilian or military pilots from SAC should fly it. And I am responding to that by saying that this was completely without foundation because there was no discussion. This responsibility throughout the entire month of September was completely with CIA and SAC nor any other military were in on those flights.

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Q. Now, can you explain why the transfer was made, the responsibility for CIA to the Air Force?

A. To the Defense Department. No, I am not in a position to discuss that.

Q. Was that a decision made at the time or was that part of an earlier plan?

A. No, that was made at the time.

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Q. There was a gap that it was either the fault of the weather or the CIA?

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A. I simply say that during the month of September the responsibility for the flights was strictly with the CIA. How the flights were organized, what the reasons for, I haven't the slightest idea and I am not the source of comment one way or the other on it. I don't know.

Q. Did CIA continue flights the next month although the responsibility had been turned over to the---

A. No. After the 14th of October the flights were all Defense Department flights.

Q. Is that the date of the transfer of responsibility?

A. No.

Q. Was there an overlap of the Defense Department and the CIA during the first two weeks of October?

A. No. No, I think as a matter of fact, the change of authority took place on or before either the 12th or the 13th. The 13th was a rainy day and the first flight was the 14th under DoD.

Q. The transfer was the 12th or 13th?

A. In that period, yes, there was no overlap.

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Q. Could you throw any light on the reason for the transfer of responsibility?

A. No, I can't help you at all.

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Q. I say that there was a period of about five or six weeks for which no pictures were shown at any briefing but Mr. McNamara gave some dates during that period in which he said flights were flown?

Can you say whether pictures were obtained during those flights?

A. What did Mr. McNamara say? I shan't add on what he did or didn't.

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OASD(PA) Answer to Inquiry from Jules Witcover, Newhouse Newspapers, 25 Feb 63

Q.-- Were pictures of useful quality obtained on flights of September 5, 17, 26, 29, and October 5, 7, and 14?

If so, what was the reason for not showing some of them in the February 6th, briefing?

A.-- Yes, except for September 17th when clouds obscured areas of interest.

Photographs of Remedios, Sagua La Grande, and Santa Clara Airfield taken September 5th and one of a ship at sea September 15th were included in the February 6th briefing.

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OASD(PA) Answer to Inquiry from Tom Ross, Chicago Sun Times, 26 Feb 1963

Q.-- Were any Cuban reconnaissance photos taken between September 5th and October 13th released?

Have any been given in closed sessions before Congressional Committees?

A.-- Following were used in February 6th briefing and released--(Numbers refer to list released with the pictures.)

2. Remedios IREM site - 5 Sept 1962
5. Sagua La Grande MREM site - 5 Sept 1962
10. Soviet ship POLTAVA enroute to Cuba - 15 Sept 1962
63. Fishbed aircraft, Santa Clara International Airfield-5 Sept 1962

The Department of Defense has not given any photos taken during this period to any Committee of Congress.

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Remarks of Representative George H. Mahon of Texas on the Floor of the House of Representatives, 7 March 1963

Mr. Speaker, I shall ask the President, the Vice President, and the Speaker of the House to undertake to coordinate a course of action for the purpose of halting the rapid erosion of our national intelligence effort. The present situation is outrageous and intolerable.

There has been talk of an intelligence gap. There is an intelligence gap. The gap is in the intelligence of those who are daily revealing the secrets of the intelligence operations of the U.S. Government. In recent weeks there has been a great excess of talk about the procedures of our intelligence apparatus. Critics have made public statements on matters which should never be discussed in public. The administration has mistakenly allowed itself to be goaded into revealing information detrimental to our best interests.

Along with many other Americans I am tired of these demonstrations of bad judgement. Every day some high ranking intelligence officer is quoted in the newspapers on one subject or another. These are men who, from the standpoint of the general public, should neither be seen nor heard. A passion for anonymity is an integral part of their jobs. Members of both the legislative and executive branches have publicly discussed matters which should only be discussed behind closed doors. Headlines are not so precious as to warrant jeopardizing our national security.

The deterioration of secrecy in regard to our intelligence-gathering techniques began in 1960 when a U-2 plane was shot down over Russia. Neither the executive branch nor the legislative branch is blameless in revealing secrets. Both Democrats and Republicans must share the blame. The question, however, is not so much who is to blame for the past, but Where do we go from here?

To be successful, intelligence activities must be secret. To let the enemy know just how many of his secrets we know and just which ones we do not know gives him a priceless advantage. Today's headline may cost the lives of the human sources of information. The enemy can find our intelligence sources much more easily when he knows what we have found out. This knowledge helps to pinpoint the location of intelligence activities, and once knowing the location, the discovery of the means is much easier and as a result intelligence sources dry up.

Our immaturity and indiscretion in these constant disclosures is making us the laughingstock of the world. Officials in Moscow, Peiping, and Havana must applaud our stupidity in announcing publicly facts which they would gladly spend huge sums of money endeavoring to obtain. Responsibility on our part is urgently required. Let us be silent with respect to these sensitive matters.

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Mr. John McCone, as Director of CIA, is charged with protection of intelligence sources. Public Law 253, 80th Congress, 1st session, states:

And provided further, That the Director of Central Intelligence shall be responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure.

I call on him to fully carry out the difficult and important duties of his office in this respect. A governmentwide coordination of effort is required.

The American people are interested in our intelligence activities. They are interested in all phases of the workings of their Government and their curiosities are aroused by the aura of mystery and adventure which surrounds the intelligence business. But we are not playing games. Our national survival to a great extent depends upon our knowledge of our enemies' activities. The price we pay for the luxury of public disclosure of intelligence activities is the further erosion of our capabilities in this field. It is difficult enough to obtain information from closed Communist societies. The American people, the press, and the officials of the executive and legislative branches of the Government must stop making a most difficult task more difficult.

There is room for plenty of discussion and criticism of our Government without revealing sensitive intelligence information.